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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 004047

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DEPT FOR AIT/W, EAP/TC, INR/EAP

FROM AIT KAOHSIUNG BRANCH OFFICE

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TW](#)

SUBJECT: TAIPEI LUMINARIES ATTEMPT TO LIGHT UP KAOHSIUNG MAYORAL  
CAMPAIGN RALLIES

REF: A) TAIPEI 4038 B) TAIPEI 3960

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED. PLEASE PROTECT ACCORDINGLY.

¶1. (SBU) Summary: All top DPP leaders, including a beleaguered President Chen Shui-bian, attended the "Love Kaohsiung, Cherish Taiwan" rally on December 3 (ref A), an indication of the importance they attach to the tight Kaohsiung mayoral race. Also on December 3, the KMT held a 20,000-strong "Anti-Corruption, Taiwan First" rally, which drew headliners KMT Chairman Ma Ying-jeou, Legislative Yuan President Wang Jin-pyng, and Honorary KMT Chairman Lien Chan. Both rallies relied on heavy mobilization, although the DPP had to bus in people from farther afield to boost attendance to 30,000, far short of the 100,000 claimed by organizers. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) In a display of support for mayoral candidate Chen Chu and a show of party unity, President Chen Shui-bian, Vice-President Annette Lu, Premier Su Tseng-chang, Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Chairman Yu Shyi-kun and Taipei Mayoral Candidate Frank Hsieh all attended and spoke at a large rally at the Kaohsiung Love River on December 3. The participation of all top DPP leaders at the rally demonstrated the importance the party attaches to winning the Kaohsiung mayoral race on December 9. Despite being tarnished by corruption allegations, President Chen appeared, accompanied by his son Chen Chih-chung. Chen Chih-chung had just brought his wife back to Taiwan so that she could give birth in Taiwan, rather than the U.S., to demonstrate the Chen family's "love" for Taiwan to Deep Green supporters. In his speech, President Chen argued the Kaohsiung election should not be viewed as a referendum on him or Kuomintang (KMT) Chairman Ma Ying-jeou, but rather as a referendum on former Kaohsiung Mayor Frank Hsieh, responsible for cleaning up the Love River.

¶3. (SBU) Attendance at the DPP rally was less than predicted. Police estimated to AIT/K that no more than 30,000 people attended the event, far short of the 100,000 claimed by the DPP. At least half of those in attendance, the police added, were not Kaohsiung residents but bused in from surrounding counties. Police recorded 69 tourist buses from Chiayi and 47 from Tainan county, while another contact reported 40 buses from Pingtung County. Crowds had entirely dissipated by 6:30 PM, well before the scheduled closing at 7:00 PM, an indication that many participants were from distant points needing to return home.

¶4. (SBU) The KMT held a counter-rally on the same day to boost support for KMT Candidate Huang Chun-ying. KMT Chairman Ma Ying-jeou, Honorary Chairman Lien Chan, and LY President Wang Jin-pyng all attended, as did almost all KMT magistrates and mayors from all over Taiwan. Rally speeches focused on the need to boost

Huang's prospects, with former Chairman Lien urging caution against last minute DPP surprises and characterizing President Chen as a corrupt and "fake" leader.

15. (SBU) According to police estimates, approximately 20,000 turned out for the KMT rally, which also relied on strong party mobilization to bring out participants. Local KMT contacts told AIT/K that the KMT threatened all Kaohsiung City Council candidates with a public reprimand by party central headquarters if they failed to appear at the Sunday rally with their supporters. KMT City Council candidates showed up with their own campaign flags flying in full view. Police told AIT/K that some buses from Kaohsiung County also brought outside supporters to the KMT rally.

#### Benefits of the Rallies

16. (SBU) One KMT official told AIT/K he did not think President Chen's campaigning and the Love River rally would draw swing votes to the DPP. An AIT/K TSU contact said "the rally attendees were mostly non-voters who came from outside Kaohsiung, adding that this show of support would not turn into votes in Kaohsiung for Chen Chu. The TSU continues to be angry with the DPP and local pro-independence groups for failing to invite TSU candidate Lo Chih-ming to attend what was touted as a "non-partisan" rally.

17. (SBU) One KMT legislative assistant suggested the competing rallies would not significantly affect voter turnout and preferences on December 9. People have already made up their minds and rallies and other campaign events primarily help candidates hold onto the votes they already have. She added that the KMT was pleased with President Chen's appearance, believing his presence was sure to spur KMT supporters and swing voters to come out in force to vote.

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President Chen no longer has the ability among non-fundamentalists to draw any kind of a crowd, she observed. According to her reading of the most recent polls, KMT candidate Huang Chun-ying will take this election unless something "drastic" happens, a factor no one in the KMT is ruling out.

18. (SBU) Kaohsiung DPP officials readily admitted to AIT/K that they had mobilized great numbers from outside the city to attend the Love River rally. Satisfied with the turnout, one DPP official said the real success of the rally was a demonstration of DPP unity, a matter of concern these past few weeks to many in the party (Ref B). He argued that the rally would inspire swing voters to support Chen Chu, but offered no evidence for his conclusion. The DPP believes, he said, this rally helped to focus attention on the success of the DPP government in Kaohsiung under Frank Hsieh, which would remind voters of the importance of reelecting a DPP administration.

19. (SBU) The most recent polls, published over the weekend by the pro-Blue China Times and United Daily News, show the KMT's Huang with a 12-14 percent lead over Chen Chu, with 25-32 percent undecided. In a Sunday evening China Broadcast News radio talk show, a Taipei professor suggested that the appearance of all the DPP's heavyweights in Kaohsiung indicated that the DPP is focusing all of its efforts on the crucial Kaohsiung race, knowing that a victory in Taipei is a long shot, but a victory in Kaohsiung is still within reach.

#### Comment

10. (SBU) Although the Sunday rallies are unlikely to shift votes from one camp to another, it remains to be seen how effective they may have been in energizing the core supporters of the KMT and DPP to turn out on election day. The extensive mobilization effort by the DPP, which had to bus in many supporters from the surrounding areas, suggests flagging enthusiasm for the party in Kaohsiung. Despite the election being just days away and the apparent lead enjoyed by the KMT in media polls, memories of the effectiveness of last-minute DPP election tactics keeps all in Kaohsiung from being willing yet to call the race for the KMT.

THIELE

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